

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
November 4, 2003

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, November 4, 2003 at 9:40 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

Present Thomas Owen, John Hermina, Charles Cresswell, Barbara Dezmon, Peter Lee and Pamela Scarbro.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES The minutes of the October meeting were accepted as written. Chairperson Owen stated that during last month's meeting Commissioners established three standing sub-committees. Commissioners agreed that the personnel sub-committee would be an ad hoc committee.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached).

Hate Crimes Summit Chairperson Owen thanked the General Counsel and other agency staff for their part in planning and organizing the Hate Crimes Summit.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See attached).

Annual Budget Hearing The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the Annual Budget Hearing was held with the Department of Budget & Management. The proposed budget was submitted in May for review by the Budget & Management Analyst. The Analyst establishes discussion points that are referred to the Secretary. The amount of federal funds received by MCHR was discussed. It was stated that MCHR would have one last opportunity to defend any recommendations that would be made with respect to budget cuts.

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that MCHR was assigned a new Legislative Budget Analyst. The analyst was briefed

on the operation of the agency. When the Executive Department formally submits its budget to the Legislature this analyst will review the budget and make recommendations to the House and Senate budget committees.

Legislative Audit

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that every three years state agencies have a legislative audit. The legislative audit is a financial audit conducted by the legislature to ensure state agencies are properly spending and accounting for state assets. This was the year for MCHR's legislative budget audit. A report is issued at the end of this process. There was one issue in the audit report, which was also in MCHR's legislative budget report three years ago. There was a security issue in the FMIS (Financial Management Information System) program. MCHR is in the process of getting this problem resolved. A copy of the auditors report and MCHR's response will be provided to Commissioners.

Community Outreach/Education Annual Report

Commissioners received copies of the Public Affairs Coordinator's Report (See attached). Commissioners also received copies of the Annual Report for review. Recommendations made by Chairperson Owen have been incorporated into the report. Commissioners should review the report and if any corrections or changes are necessary, please inform the Public Affairs Coordinator by November 14, 2003.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT Case Processing Report

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached).

The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that the average number of days in processing of the housing cases has decreased. HUD started funding cases based on the amount of time to process in October.

The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that the number of days in process of the employment and public accommodation cases is increasing. This is due to under-staffing in the area of public accommodations and the agency's intake of employment cases is exceeding the number of cases that are completed. Investigators are working on the oldest cases first and it is taking longer to get cases into assignment.

Chairperson Owen congratulated staff on the completion of housing cases.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the Assistant Director's Report (See attached). The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that there are no significant budget issues this month. The first quarter of the budget year was just completed. MCHR is on target with spending.

The Assistant Director acknowledged the hard work of staff in the Administrative Services Department which resulted in the agency receiving an almost “clean bill of health” from its recently completed legislative audit.

Information Technology
Unit

Commissioners received copies of the Information Technology Manager’s Report (See attached). The Manager informed Commissioners that steps have been taken to reduce junk e-mails.

Chairperson Owen inquired as to reporting hate crime statistics in the state on the agency’s web page. The Manager of Information Technology stated that the data could be reported on the web page. The Community Education/Outreach Unit has reports of hate crimes.

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the counties that report high numbers of hate crimes have a system to report hate crimes; the counties that do not report any hate crimes usually do not have a system.

Vice-Chair Hermina suggested that one of the Commissioners Sub-Committees could work with agency staff to coordinate ways to deal with hate crimes throughout the state.

**GENERAL
COUNSEL’S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the General Counsel’s Report (See attached).

Remedies Bill

Vice-Chair Hermina stated that MCHR should contact delegates and/or representatives of the Senate to obtain their support of the remedies bill, in case it is submitted in the next session.

The General Counsel stated that MCHR should begin dialogue with the Chamber of Commerce to find out what their concerns are and work together to resolve them.

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Barbara Wilson